



SAN DIEGO ADULT DRUG COURT

Fact Sheet

Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about Drug Court.

What is a Drug Court?

A Drug Court is a special type court that specializes in cases involving non-violent, drug-using felony offenders. The program includes taking responsibility for your actions, frequent random drug testing, judicial supervision, drug treatment and counseling, education and vocational training opportunities, and the use of court imposed sanctions and incentives. In Drug Courts the Judge is actively involved in supervising each participant with the prosecutor, defense attorney, law enforcement officers, and a case manager. Upon successful completion of the criminal drug court program, which constitutes a minimum of 18 months, probation may be terminated, or in rare instances, based on the recommendation of the prosecutor, the drug charge may be dismissed.

How many Drug Courts are there?

According to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), in June 2010 there were over 2,500 Drug Courts in the nation (this includes Adult, Juvenile and Family Drug Courts). Approximately 12% of the nation's Drug Courts operate in California. Each of the programs in San Diego County were designed using the guidelines from the Federal Office of Drug Court Policy. San Diego County Drug Courts include:

- North County Drug Court - started January, 1997;
- Central Division Drug Court - started March, 1997;
- East County Drug Court - started August, 1997;
- South County Drug Court - started October, 1997;

Since their inception, more than 3,000 individuals have graduated from San Diego's adult Drug Courts.

What is the Adult Drug Court's mission?

The mission of the Adult Drug Court Program is twofold: to improve lives that have been impacted by drug addiction, and to increase public safety by reducing the amount and frequency of drug-related crimes. These goals are accomplished by assisting the participants in leading clean, sober, independent and productive lives. The tools used to provide this assistance are mandated treatment, rigorous court supervision, sanctions and the dedication of caring and knowledgeable collaborative team members.

How is the Adult Drug Court funded?

San Diego Adult Drug Courts operate with Federal and State grant money. In addition, local agencies contribute staff resources. Efforts to obtain federal, state and local funding are regional in approach. The County of San Diego, in collaboration with the San Diego Superior Court, has applied for and received funding for Drug Court operations, including state funding through the CA Drug Court Partnership Act and Comprehensive Drug Court Implementation Act.

Participants in the Adult Drug Court programs also pay fees to contribute toward their success. In most cases a \$20 fee is collected each week by the treatment provider to help off-set costs.

What entities are involved in the Adult Drug Court?

The Drug Court Team consists of representatives from the following entities:

- Superior Court – Judge and support staff;
- District Attorney;
- Public Defender;
- State and local law enforcement agencies;
- Case management and treatment providers.

How do Drug Court Teams receive training?

Most grants obtained by the San Diego Drug Courts require that the applicant allocate a portion of the grant's budget to on-going training. Teams obtain training through local, state and national organizations such as:

- NADCP - National Ass'n of Drug Court Professionals;
- CADCP - California Ass'n of Drug Court Professionals;
- NDCI – National Drug Court Institute;
- SD County Health and Human Services Agency;
- National Judicial College; and,
- UCSD – Clinical Institute in Addiction Studies

Why do we need Drug Court?

The connection between drug addiction and crime has been well documented at the local, state, and federal level. The cycle of drug use, criminal prosecution, and incarceration has not been shown to deter recidivism in drug addicts. Recent studies indicate that more than 70% of people sent to prison, will return to prison within three years of their release. Drug Courts attempt to change this cycle using a collaborative justice model, where the criminal justice system links with the treatment system to challenge drug addicted offenders to become stable and law-abiding citizens.

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Are Violent/Serious Offenders Eligible?

San Diego's Drug Courts exclude offenders charged with violent or serious offenses, sex crimes, and drug manufacturing. Protecting public safety is the most important goal.

Are Drug Courts cost effective?

The CA Administrative Office of the Courts has conducted several research studies on California's Drug Courts, finding that every \$1.00 invested in Drug Courts net an average of \$7.30 in savings. The outpatient treatment programs utilized by Drug Court are relatively inexpensive when compared to incarceration costs. Current estimates place Drug Court participant funding at approximately \$13,000 per person, per year, compared to \$47,000 per person, per year in prison expenses. Drug Court participants plead guilty to the felony they were charged with, most are facing two years in prison, so the savings associated with avoiding prison is more than ample. In addition, immeasurable savings result to the community from reductions in property crime and reduced public health costs.

Are Drug Courts Another "Soft-on-Crime" Program?

Drug Courts across the country rely on close law enforcement supervision and immediate sanctions when warranted. Comprehensive and multi-faceted supervision/monitoring is achieved through linkages with law enforcement, random drug testing, home checks, and regular judicial contact create a comprehensive case management approach. Drug Courts place more stringent conditions on offenders, than traditional proceedings

The Judge's "tool box" in Drug Court includes the ability to order immediate sanctions when a participant has re-lapsed or not followed program rules. This can include community service, jail, added drug testing, and self-evaluation by the participant.

How often does Drug Court convene?

The Drug Court Team meets weekly. Participants appear before the judge weekly in phase 1, but bi-weekly or monthly in later phases of the program. At each court appearance a progress report is prepared by the case manager and law enforcement provides updates.

Are Drug Courts Effective in Reducing Recidivism?

The National Association for Drug Court Professionals estimates that approximately 75% of Drug Court graduates remain arrest-free for at least two years following program completion. In San Diego, the District Attorney's Office researched Adult Drug Court recidivism and found that: 14% have a new conviction within 1 year of completion; 25% have a new conviction within 2 years of completion and 29% have a new conviction within 3 years of completion.

What does the treatment program entail?

The four Adult Drug Court Programs utilize a single case manager who creates a treatment plan incorporating community referrals with drug/alcohol treatment. The case manager is under contract with San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency. The Drug Court Teams and case manager work together to design a drug intervention program that meets the needs of the participant, provides an early opportunity for treatment, and a cost-effective approach to rehabilitation. The program has been established cooperatively by the Superior Court, Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, County HHS-A Alcohol & Drug Services, and law enforcement agencies. Treatment services are designed to meet the participants needs and include: Group and individual therapy; coordinated case management; drug testing; placement in residential treatment, sober living and mental health programs as deemed appropriate by the Drug Court Team and availability of resources.

In addition, referrals to ancillary services are provided. These may include: job and employment assistance, education, such as obtaining a G.E.D.; and health referrals.

What happens at graduation?

Upon completion of the 18-month program, the participant, along with their family and friends, are invited to a graduation ceremony to celebrate their accomplishments. Upon graduation, and depending on the underlying charges, probation may be terminated or, based on the recommendation of the prosecutor, the criminal case may be reduced to a misdemeanor or dismissed. Post program activities include an alumni association, aftercare plans and mentoring projects.



More Information?

If you would like additional information about the San Diego Adult Drug Court Programs, visit the Superior Court's web-site at www.sdcourt.ca.gov.